

Transaction No. 24

Notes on the Founding of Christ Church, Campbellford by Miss Hilda Bonnycastle

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indebted for a great deal of useful information respecting this portion of my mission; and I reached Rawdon Mills early in the evening. The next day I proceeded to the township of Seymour, which township, though not the limits of the Midland District, I have been directed by the shop to visit occasionally. From Major Campbell I met with the d and encouraging reception, and learned that the inhabitants of

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The Township of Seymour was settled largely by families of English, Irish and Scotch descent. Many of these early settlers were retired officers of the British Army and Navy, who had spent many years in the service and defence of their country, in the old land and in Canada; and to these pioneers of the forest we owe many privileges now enjoyed. Capt. Masson Col. Raynes, Capt. Le Vesconte, Capt. McIntosh, Capt. Shea, Capt. Macdonald (father of the late Judge Macdonald of Guelph and grandfather of Dr. A. A. Macdonald of Toronto) and Capt. Cassan an account of whose coming to Canada in 1834 appeared in Transaction No. 22 of this Society, were some of these remembered names.

Among them many belonged to the Anglican faith, but at first for many years they had no church and no resident clergyman of any denomination among them, only occasional visits from travelling missionaries; and many responsibilities devolved upon the shoulders of these early settlers in the bush; such as the religious instruction of their children, as well as their education for there were no schools either for many years.

In the diary of Capt. M. S. Cassan we read his account of having been called upon to bury the dead, and even of having been called in where the services of a doctor were necessary.¹

In 1835 we have the earliest known account of religious services in Seymour, and the first mention of a proposed Anglican Church in that region. In that year travelling missionaries were sent out by the Bishop (Bishop Jacob Mountain) to visit the scattered flocks in the unorganized districts.

From the Rev. Mr. Harpur's reports published by Rev. J. Pickford of Brighton in the Canadian Churchman of October 23rd, 1924, we read—

"Of his visit to Seymour on the 7th of June, 1835, he says: "On the Sunday following I assisted the Rev. Mr. Cochran in the performance of divine service in the Church at Belleville, and on Monday after having been detained for some hours in endeavouring to procure a horse, my own having got injured on the back by the saddle, I set out about noon, in company with Mr. Birdsall, Government Surveyor, to whom I am much indebted for a great deal of useful information respecting this portion of my mission; and I reached Rawdon Mills early in the evening. The next day I proceeded to the township of Seymour, which township, though not within the limits of the Midland District, I have been directed by the Lord Bishop to visit occasionally. From Major Campbell I met with the most kind and encouraging reception, and learned that the inhabitants of

the township are particularly desirous of having a clergyman resident among them, and to whose maintenance they would willingly contribute. They have also held the building of a church, or rather, I should say, churches in contemplation; but owing to some little disagreement about the proposed site, they have never yet been able to carry their measures into effect." Mr. Harpur again visited Seymour in August, preaching on the 11th of that month, Tuesday, in a barn in the fifth concession of Murray (that would be in or near the Village of Wooler) reaching Seymour the following Sunday. He officiated in the morning in a barn near Major Campbell's, and in the afternoon on the other side of the river "in the upper chamber of a grist mill belonging to Mr. Ramsay."² On this occasion he informs us that a Mr. John Tice kindly acted as clerk both morning and afternoon. On the 23rd Mr. Harpur, who at that time was in deacon's orders, exchanged with Mr. Givens of the Mohawk Reserve for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He records that there were twenty-four communicants. Seymour was again visited in September, when he found that they had decided to build two churches, one on either side of the river and that the sum of £30 per annum for three years had been subscribed towards the support of a resident clergyman. These expectations were apparently not fulfilled as Seymour continues on the list of Dr. Bethune's "distant stations" as late as the year 1849."

The optimistic reference to the "churches in contemplation," mentioned by the missionary were not fulfilled for many years. The difficulty of choice between the two sites offered contributing to the delay; and the place did not grow as rapidly as those whose hopes were founded upon an early construction of the canal had anticipated, so later it was found that one church was sufficient for the town.

In the meantime we have some slight knowledge of the conditions of religious life in the settlement which the missionaries continued to visit. Several places are mentioned where, more or less regularly, divine services were held. Many families of the Anglican faith had settled in what was called "The English Line." They brought some old English customs with them, for on Christmas Eve, some of them, the Hurd family and the Grills especially, used to drive to the homes of their neighbors singing Christmas Carols. A settler might be in bed and wakened by the singers, but the kindly custom was to rise and invite them in to have something to eat. By the "Line" the home of Capt. Le Vesconte was used for the purpose of divine service. Children were baptized there and confirmation services held. In the absence of a clergyman Mrs. Le Vesconte read the services herself and a Sunday School was held for the children. When the services were over Mrs. Le Vesconte would attend to the ailments of her congregation from her medicine chest. This medicine chest remained in the family until the breaking up of the home in 1918.³

Day children also went to this home for instruction during the week, before the building of the School House on the English Line in 1849.⁴

An old-timer recalls being taught as a boy by Miss Rose Le Vesconte, who became Mrs. McCauley, wife of the famous divine at Picton. Another Miss Le Vesconte became Mrs. Wills of Belleville, mother of Judge Wills. The old-timer before mentioned also recalls being confirmed by Bishop Strachan, when he went to his confirmation in his bare feet.

On the erection of the Schoolhouse divine services were held there.

A Building known as Tom Hall's School House on the east side of the river was also used for services. This house was on, or near, the farm now owned by the Walkinshaw family.

Services were also held in a log building owned by Mr. Boland, who kept the Post Office at "The Patch", known later as the old cricket grounds, now known as the Bowling Green, near the present site of the Pulp Mills at Ranney's Falls.

A room over John Gibbs' store was sometimes used and also the sitting-room of Mr. Willman's Hotel was on Sundays, chiefly Sunday afternoon, set aside for the purpose of worship. Mrs. Willman was very hospitable, and the children were given a piece of cake^s before returning on their homeward journey—often a distance of several miles. Services were also held at Meyersburg and the surrounding country, where the settlers were almost all English Church families, in earlier days. Before long a Methodist Church was built and many families joined that body.

This gives some idea of the struggles toward higher things of this infant community, out of which slowly emerged the town of Campbellford, so named after Major Campbell, Government land agent, a brother of Col. Campbell; the "ford" or ferry opposite his house was in early days the only means of crossing the river, later a bridge was built across the Trent river connecting Seymour West with Seymour East. This took the place of the ferry, which had long served the purpose. At this time Campbellford is described as being "a few log cabins surrounded by forest and called Seymour Bridge, or "The Bridge" only.

A little later, in 1850, Prof. John Macoun writes "At this time most of the land in Seymour West was bush and the roads little better than paths. One thing was creditable to the settlers, they were all willing to help each other, and "Bees" were the regular way of helping a farmer in distress. These early settlers made Canada! I do not remember an idle man, all worked, and although the pay was poor and the returns very often scarcely anything, I do not remember a dissatisfied man."

During the forties the Rev. Mr. Bowers then living at Cobourg, was visiting Clergyman to the Township of Seymour and held services in the several localities above mentioned. But these religious services, irregularly held, could not take the place of a resident clergyman or a church home. An extract from the Diary of Capt. M. S. Cassan shows this. "On the Atlantic Ocean on board *The Lady Franklin* June 13th, 1852— 'One of the passengers, a Scotch young man in this state-room is reading the Bible alone. To the credit of the Scotch people be it spoken

I have always found them a religious people and well conducted, and their clergy pay great attention to their flocks' instruction in their religious duties. I wish I could say the same of our Protestant clergy, the Missionary ministers now in the wilderness of Canada. Too many of them forget their duty and neglect their calling; too many ill become the holy office they have undertaken, and the neglect of such members seriously injures our protestant established church and many sheep have strayed from the fold, owing to the carelessness of the shepherd . . . to watch over them. This I know to be a fact in my own Township of Seymour, the Methodist Missionaries are gaining ground fast in the Canadian forests and I am not surprised.' "

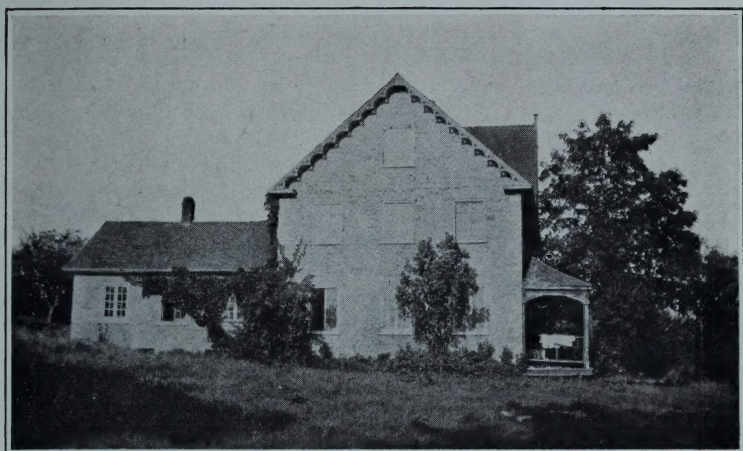
The writer of the diary was the son of Rev. Joseph Cassan of Ireland, and had been brought up by a religious father, and the above only speaks the anxiety that harboured in the breast of many an Anglican early settler who saw the church losing ground, and its members joining other denominations.

Old-timers tell us to-day, that upon the English Line where nearly all the families were originally of Anglican faith, there was no one to hold the people; the Methodists built a church in that locality and most of the families attended and became Methodists. There are eight Methodist churches to-day in the Township of Seymour, and one English Church, namely Christ Church, Campbellford.

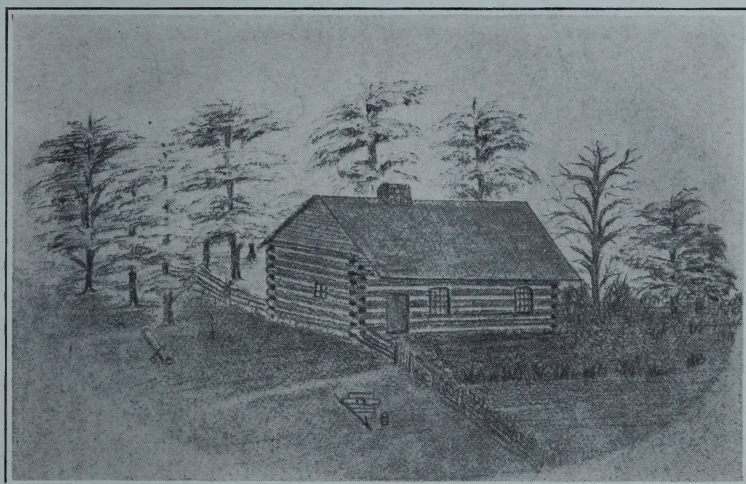
The Rev. Mr. Bowers later left Cobourg and moved to Seymour, becoming the first resident Anglican clergyman in the Township. He resided in a log house provided by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Bonnycastle, south of and across the road from their own residence⁶ in Seymour West. It was a very commodious house for those days, being 36×42 feet, containing a hall and four rooms with closets on the ground-floor, and an upstairs. It had a verandah or stoop in front and a large French window at the back. It was surrounded by a grove of acacia trees and was called "The Acacias." It was built as a wedding present for Eleanor Rowed upon her marriage to Capt. Henry Bonnycastle, after the close of the Rebellion of 1837 in which he served under his father, Sir Richard Henry Bonnycastle.⁷

It was sometimes called "Bridal Lodge" on account of its being the first house of so many brides in early days. Besides Mrs. Bonnycastle, Mrs. Bowers came as a bride, and in later years it was the first home of Mr. and Mrs. Cyprian Caddy. Cyprian Caddy was the provincial land-surveyor who surveyed or laid out Campbellford; Frank St. being named from their son who was born in the log house mentioned above to which another Capt. R. H. Bonnycastle brought his bride in 1869, and which was occupied until 1876.

Mr. Bowers went from here to his several places of worship chiefly on horseback, or was sometimes driven to them by the neighbors.



Rowed Homestead built by Henry Rowed, opposite the church and rectory. Henry Rowed and his wife deeded 12 acres to the church. House now used as a hospital.



The Acacias or "Bridal Lodge" from the rear.
Note old well in foreground.



The desire for a church of their own had never ceased, and at last the faithful workers were in a position to attain their object. One of the retired military men who settled in Seymour was a Capt. John Tice, who with his family did a great deal towards starting the church. He took up a grant of several hundred acres from the Government; building the first house on the hill, the present site of the rectory. It was a good frame house which his family occupied for some years.

In 1834 the Rowed family came to Canada, including Mrs. Rowed, widow of a naval officer, two sons and several daughters, and took up land in Seymour west. They seem to have proved the deciding factor in building the church—for we find that while Mr. Bowers was occupying the log house placed at the disposal of the first resident clergyman, other members of the Rowed family were preparing a permanent residence for the clergyman.

Some of the Tice property became the property of members of the Rowed family—one of whom, Mrs. Carlow, built the large stone house on the river road which she occupied for many years—and later sold to Mr. Charles Buller. It was known for long years as the Buller Homestead and was a landmark in the township.

Bishop Strachan wisely desired that the new establishment should be put on a permanent footing, not only was a church to be built but "the congregation have been called upon by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese to provide the Missionary with a residence and to contribute fifty pounds annually to his maintenance"; and as the lesser proposition, the rectory was first provided.

As early as 1835 there was some difficulty as to the choice of a site for the church; Major Campbell had offered land for the purpose on the east side of the river, the site upon which the Roman Catholic Church was afterwards built; but the offer of twelve acres and a house from the Rowed family meant so much more, that it was accepted in preference; thus was settled the long-contemplated problem—the site of Campbellford Church.

In 1851 the land, which was bush, was with much difficulty surveyed for a rectory and glebe.

The lines were run and a brush fence made around three sides, the road allowance making the fourth. Five years later it was properly surveyed and added to the church. It comprised twelve acres, deeded to the Bishop of the Diocese "and to his successors forever" for the use of the church by Henry Rowed and "Kate his wife" who "in further consideration of the sum of five shillings of lawful money of Canada to her by the said Lord Bishop of Toronto in hand paid hath released, remitted and forever relinquished her dower in the premises with him the said John Lord Bishop of Toronto" etc. The house which stood upon the land was a gift to the Church by Henry Rowed's sister Mrs. Carlow.

By the deed one acre and a half out of the twelve, is excepted and reserved "to be held in trust forever as a site for the use of the said Church now erected thereon and for a burial ground in connection therewith according to the rites and customs of said church and for no other use or purpose whatsoever."

The land conveyed was part of Lot No. 10 in the seventh concession of the Township of Seymour. The deed was duly registered in March 1855, and is now in the Registry Office for the east riding of Northumberland Co.

The Rev. John Samuel Clarke, missionary of Seymour and Percy from 1853-1856, was the first clergyman to occupy the "Parsonage". It was during his incumbency the church was built. Before its erection services were held in the school house on the English Line.

That the parson of that day was not "passing rich" on fifty pounds a year we have evidence in the following incident—When Capt. Cassan (an extract from whose diary is given above) was in Ireland in 1852, his uncle, Capt. Elsmere, died, and his aunt gave him a large number of books for children, as well as his uncle's well-supplied wardrobe, which did not prove suitable for the backwoods. Included in the latter was a handsome frock-coat, which Mrs. Cassan decided to give to the Clergyman. She walked a distance of about five miles to the rectory, with her daughter Charlotte (Mrs. R. H. Bonnycastle) who as a little girl carried the bundle, containing the coat. "I have taken the liberty of bringing you this coat, Mr. Clarke, if you are not too proud to wear it," Mrs. Cassan said. "Proud! What have I to be proud of?" he said, raising two arms and showing very worn sleeves. He gratefully accepted the coat and wore it.

This was in 1854 and Mrs. Bonnycastle recalls picking their steps over the rough stones used in building the church, the roof of which was then on.

Church building in pioneer times and among a willing people has much the same history. The new church was to be of stone and it was reckoned would "cost between four and five hundred pounds," about three hundred of which had already been subscribed. Mr. George Ranney, the mill-owner, gave all the lumber used in building the church and Mrs. Carlow gave the timber and contributed fifty pounds towards the erection of the church, thus proving herself a great benefactress. She also gave a private gift of land to Mr. Clarke, the first rector. The settlers sent their teams and hired men, or went themselves and hauled the material needed for building, the stone, sand and lime for plaster, etc. The church was opened for worship in November, 1853.

The united efforts of these and other early settlers resulted in the building of the beautiful little church which has ever since been considered one of the prettiest churches in the Diocese outside the city of Toronto.

Help was also solicited from the Mother Church of Ireland. Miss Emily Cooke, a grand-daughter of Captain John Tice, still preserves a memorandum of monies received through her aunt, Mrs. George Tice, from her friends in Waterford, Ireland, for helping to build Christ Church. This list of subscribers may be incomplete but from it we find that about thirteen pounds sterling was raised the Bishop of Cashel and Waterford who sponsored it, giving three pounds. The collection was made on the certificate of Mr. Clarke, "missionary of Seymour West, Canada West," who writes thus of his congregation:—"Situated in the backwoods of the interior of Canada West, and depending on their agricultural labours (in a comparatively new settlement) for their livelihood, they are far from being competent to fulfil unaided their long cherished object; and therefore having first contributed to the utmost of their ability towards the promotion of their design they now appeal to benevolent friends of our church in Ireland," etc., etc.

The following heads of families were among the first attending Christ Church in 1854:

John Atkinson	Wm. Free
John Acheson	Thomas Free
James Archer	Hugh Gibb*
Gilbert Bedford	Wm. Ivey
Henry Bonnycastle	Thomas Little
Robt. P. Boucher	James Le Vesconte
Mr. Bennett	Frederick Macoun
Major Campbell	John Odell
Robt. Cockburn	Wm. Ogilvie*
Daniel Curling	George W. Ranney
Mrs. Carlow	Henry Rowed
Capt. M. S. Cassan	Thomas Rendle
Dr. Denmark	Edward Tildesly
Alex. Denmark	Mrs. Taylor
Wm. Dunk	Capt. John Tice
Alonzo Dunk	Capt. George Tice
Abraham Free	Wm. Varcoe ^s

*Mr. Gibb and Mr. Ogilvie belonged to the Scotch Church but their nearest being at Burnbrae, they attended the English Church.

Two items from the day book of Alfred Rendle may be of interest. "Nov. 9th, 1854, Received from Mr. H. Rowed, church-warden, for strapping walls of church and altering door, £20.

"Aug. 16th, 1855, Plastering the church, John Forbes (£13.10s.)."

In 1856 Mr. Clarke left and until Feb. 1858 the parish was without a resident clergyman, during which time occasional visits were paid by visiting clergymen, one of whom was the Rev. Charles Ruttan.

The next incumbent, Rev. F. G. S. Groves, remained for ten years till 1868. In 1861 the church being freed from debt was consecrated by

Bishop Strachan. The gallery was added, and to help to defray the expense of some interior furnishings Mrs. Groves solicited help from her friends in England. Mr. Groves held services at Warkworth in Percy Township and fortnightly in the School-house on the English Line, leaving his horse at the Varcoes and walking to the school.

1868-1875. Rev. Jonas Stamer Baker followed Mr. Groves. The old frame-house was burned down and the present Rectory built in 1871, the rector defraying a good deal of the expense of building. He married Grace, daughter of Henry Rowed, and they were the first to occupy the house.

1875-1883. The Rev. Ralph Hinds succeeded Mr. Baker. During his day the chancel was added to the church. The burial ground of the church, which had been in use for over twenty years, was condemned for that purpose owing to the dampness of the soil, and the new cemetery⁹ on the hill was added to the church in consequence and consecrated.

Rev. Thaddeous Walker was rector from 1885-91. During his pastorate more land was added to the new cemetery, and the school-house on Rear St. was bought by the church with a legacy bequeathed to it by Mr. Robert Cockburn. This was intended to serve as a site for a Parish Hall and had originally been a Bible-Christian place of worship. The rectory was also enlarged and improved. Sunday afternoon services were held by Mr. Walker at Warkworth, and at times these services were taken by Mr. Jupp, who lived at the rectory.

1891-1901. The Rev. W. E. Cooper was rector during this period and many improvements were added to the church, as stained glass memorial windows and furnishings. The services at Warkworth were discontinued. Mr. Cooper endeavoured to re-establish the holding of services on the English Line, and for some time they were held on Sunday afternoons in the School House. But they had been so long discontinued and the Methodist Church was so well established that the trustees objected to the School House being used for the purpose.

Mr. Cooper devoted much time to the instruction of the young people, and for many years after his departure it was a recognized fact that those trained by him were among the best workers in the church.

1901-1911. The Rev. A. J. Reid followed Mr. Cooper and was rector of Christ Church for ten years. He edited the Parish Monthly Magazine, which was full of interesting accounts of improvements to the church, rectory and grounds and of other activities. During his pastorate, the Jubilee of the 50th anniversary of the church was held in 1904, in which year the pipe organ and the organ loft were added to the church's equipment.

The more recent history of the little church is known to all Campbellford and needs not to be recounted.

Notes

¹Extract from Capt. Cassan's Diary—during one of his visits to Ireland—"It did not take me long to settle my affairs, and I think I remained six weeks at my mother's in my native village. I must not forget the happy weeks at Ballykelcavan with Sir Edward Walsh (a relative) and his brother with whom the Revds. McGrath and Mears used frequently to dine. My stories of Canadian bush life, made them roar with laughter, especially when I told them how I acted as accoucheur, made coffins, buried the dead, and read funeral services over my neighbour's children. I had a pleasant time with Sir Edward, and when I went to bid him farewell he handed me a letter of introduction from the Earl of Derby to Lord Metcalfe the then Governor-General of Canada; (Gov.-Gen. from Mch 1843-Nov. 1845) and in shaking hands with him he placed a £20 bank note in my hand. . . . Before my return to Canada the Rev. Mr. Johnson sent me a box of school books, bibles and prayer-books to take out to Mrs. C. for our children. These were duly appreciated and most useful to my wife in her endeavor to educate the "babes in the wood".

²Mr. Ranney owned the mill here mentioned opposite the site of the town power house; in which services were often held in early days. In later years he owned the mills at Ranney's Falls which as well as Ranney St., Campbellford, were named after him. The name Ramsay's Mills is not known in Campbellford.

Note from Capt. Cassan's diary, Feb. 8, 1850, "Sold to Mr. George Ranney grist mill and turning lathe—for a horse, bridle and saddie. £3 17s. 9d. Cash for John Gilcrist and as much sawn lumber as will build a frame barn 30×50, and to be delivered on or before the 15th day of November 1850 at Robert Beatty's farm on the bank."

The grist mill and turning lathe were some of the numerous stock brought to Canada by Capt. Cassan in anticipation of the life in the backwoods.

³Mrs. Le Vesconte not only took the services and gave out medicines from her famous mahogany chest, but kept many of the congregation to dinner.

⁴Transactions No. 22, page 29, gives an account of the securing of this school to the district by Mrs. Cassan.

⁵Miss Bonnycastle writes, "I spent some time recently with the bare-footed candidate now over 80; and an aged lady over 90, who received the cake from Mrs. Millman and attended services in all the places mentioned."

⁶The old house had many occupants after my grand-parents left it sometime in the forties. Relatives and friends lived there, rent was never thought of and my grandfather often did legal business for the neighbours free of charge. Maids could be secured for three or four dollars a month and there was no shortage of help in early days.

⁷Sir Richard Bonnycastle, R.E., served in the war of 1812 and was knighted for services in connection with the defence of Kingston in 1837,

and later held the position of Commanding Royal Engineer in Newfoundland. He lived for some time in Toronto, two of the books he wrote were—"Canada As it was, is, and may be," and "Canada and the Canadians in 1846."

⁸Miss Bonnycastle writes, "An old clipping, 20 years old gave me the names of heads of families attending the church in 1854; but I recalled my father and Mr. Rowed discussing the incorrectness of the list then published in our local newspaper and I am able to send you a revised and more correct list."

Of her work in preparing this paper Miss Bonnycastle writes, "I have gathered it bit by bit, thread by thread from many sources. The pioneer families have many of them moved away, but I have corresponded with their descendants and relatives, and many recent letters confirm the data I sent you directly from those who knew. I have kept notes for years on local things, diaries helped me out. My mother remembered much and an old scrap-book she had made was invaluable".

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